

**“THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AUSTRALIAN HEALTH
SECTOR OF A GROWING AND AGEING ASIA – AN
EMERGING PICTURE”.**

ADDRESS BY THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER

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COLLEGE CEREMONY

**SINGAPORE
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THANK YOU MADAM PRESIDENT

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

AND MOST OF ALL TODAY, GRADUATES.

MAY I START BY SAYING WHAT A PLEASURE IT IS TO BE
SPEAKING AT THIS GRADUATION CEREMONY.

ALL GRADUATION CEREMONIES ARE SPECIAL OCCASIONS.
AND I AM ALWAYS PLEASED TO BE PART OF THEM.

BUT TO BE PART OF THE INITIATION OF A NEW COHORT INTO
A BODY AS AUGUST AS THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW
ZEALAND COLLEGE OF ANAESTHETISTS IS A PARTICULAR
PRIVILEGE.

MAY I ALSO SAY THAT IT IS VERY PLEASING TO ME THAT
THE CONFERENCES OF THE COLLEGE OF ANAESTHETICS AND
THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS HAVE CHOSEN TO UNDERTAKE

THEIR ANNUAL ACTIVITIES HERE, IN SINGAPORE, OF WHICH THIS GRADUATION CEREMONY IS BROADLY A PART.

AS YOU WILL HEAR SOON, I THINK THAT PHENOMENAL THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD, AND I COMMEND YOU DR ROBERTS, AND YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM, IN DECIDING TO STAGE YOUR CONFERENCE HERE IN THE HEART OF VIBRANT ASIA. IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE TO WORK WITH YOUR TEAM TO MAKE IT A SUCCESS.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT YOU WILL FIND THIS CITY, NOT ONLY A PLEASANT AND CONVENIENT PLACE TO HOST YOUR CONFERENCE, BUT ALSO THOUGHT PROVOKING ABOUT OUR PLACE, AS AUSTRALIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS, IN ASIA'S TRAJECTORY.

BUT BEFORE WE GET TOO DEEPLY INTO THAT, I WANT TO OFFER MY SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF YOU WHO ARE GRADUATING TODAY.

THIS DAY IS A CULMINATION OF YEARS OF EFFORT – AND, FOR MANY OF YOU, PERHAPS MORE THAN EFFORT, PERHAPS STRUGGLE, PERHAPS SACRIFICE.

IT MARKS A VERY SUBSTANTIAL ACHIEVEMENT FOR EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU.

THIS ALSO REPRESENTS A NEW BEGINNING – A DIFFERENT AND POTENTIALLY MORE ENRICHING CHAPTER IN YOUR CAREERS.

I WISH YOU THE BEST FOR THAT NEXT CHAPTER, WHILE COMMENDING YOU FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT YOU CELEBRATE TODAY.

IT IS NO SMALL THING IN AUSTRALIA TO BECOME A DOCTOR. IT IS AMONGST THE MOST DISTINGUISHED OF PROFESSIONS. IT IS SOMETHING RATHER SPECIAL TO BE ACCEPTED INTO THE ELITE CIRCLE OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS.

I URGE YOU TO CHERISH THAT TODAY, AND TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR ACHIEVEMENT.

FOR MANY OF YOU, THIS SUCCESS IS NEVER ACHIEVED ALONE. MUCH OF WHAT YOU CELEBRATE TODAY WILL HAVE BEEN MADE POSSIBLE BY THE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE OF YOUR FAMILIES, FRIENDS, STAFF AND TEACHERS.

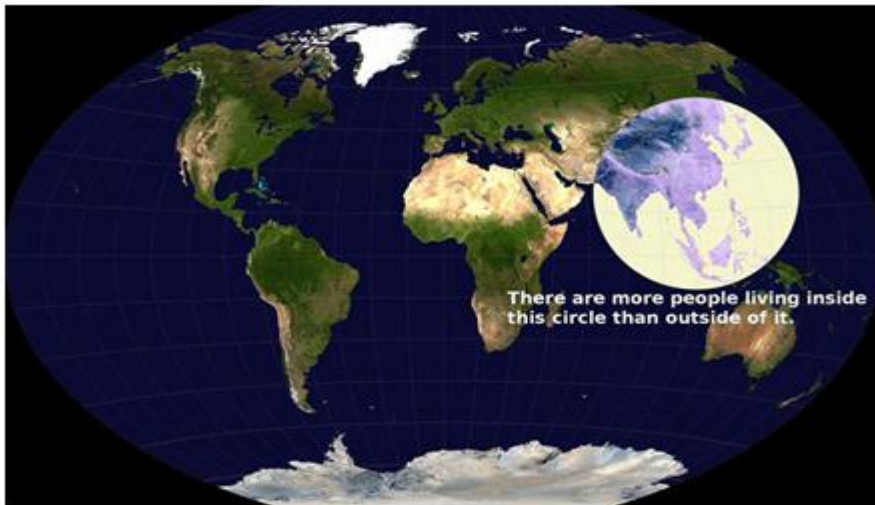
SO I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ALSO EXTEND MY CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF YOU IN THAT WIDER GROUP HERE TODAY - FOR THE ROLE YOU HAVE PLAYED IN THE LIVES OF THE COHORT WHO ARE GRADUATING.

AND NOW, TO SINGAPORE, AND ASIA, AND WHAT IS GOING ON HERE MATTERS FOR AUSTRALIA...

I WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS ON A COUPLE OF KEY DYNAMICS IN THE CHANGING ASIAN SCENE, AND OFFER SOME PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS ON HOW THESE CHANGES MIGHT BE RELEVANT TO THE HEALTH SECTOR IN AUSTRALIA AND, JUST POSSIBLY, TO SOME OF YOU.

FIRST, LET ME SET OUT FOR YOU HOW I SEE ASIA'S DEVELOPMENT.

SOMETIMES A PICTURE CAN HELP US BETTER GRASP THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEVELOPMENTS AROUND US.



MORE PEOPLE LIVE INSIDE THE CIRCLE THAN OUTSIDE IT...

THIS SLIDE HELPS US TO UNDERSTAND ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PHENOMENAL CHANGES IN ASIA, VERY CLOSE TO OUR AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND HOMES.

ASIA IS THE WORLD'S MOST POPULOUS CONTINENT, WITH 4.3 BILLION PEOPLE, OR 60 PER CENT OF THE PLANET'S POPULATION.

FOR MUCH OF OUR LIVES, ASIA HAS BEEN DENSELY POPULATED, BUT MOSTLY POOR. THAT IS CHANGING.

A COMBINATION OF GOOD DEMOGRAPHICS AND INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY IS DRIVING THE MOST SIGNIFICANT GLOBAL DYNAMIC OF OUR TIME – THE ECONOMIC RISE OF ASIA.

LET'S EXAMINE ASIA'S GROWTH TRAJECTORY IN RELATIVE TERMS.

ASIA IS SET TO OVERTAKE THE COMBINED ECONOMIC OUTPUT OF EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA WITHIN THE DECADE TO 2020.

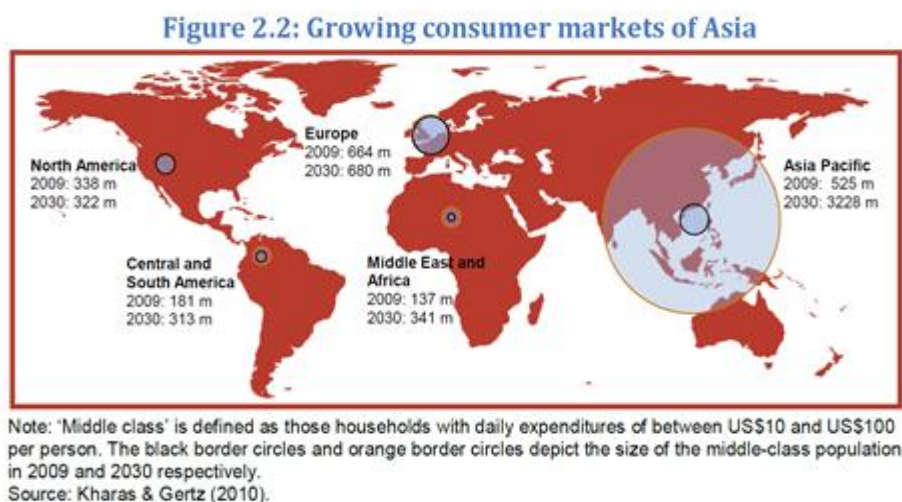
BY 2025, THE REGION AS A WHOLE IS EXPECTED TO ACCOUNT FOR ALMOST HALF OF THE WORLD'S OUTPUT.

CHINA ALONE MAY BE THE WORLD'S LARGEST ECONOMY BY THE END OF THIS DECADE.

SO, WHILE THE PICTURE OF THE GLOBE WITH THE HIGHLIGHTED CIRCLE TELLS US SOMETHING ABOUT ASIA'S POPULATION – A REALITY NOW - WHAT ECONOMISTS TELL US IS THAT ASIA WILL SOON BE NOT JUST THE WORLD'S MOST POPULOUS REGION, BUT ALSO THE WORLD'S MOST SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC ZONE AND THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CONSUMPTION ZONE.

THE ASIA GROWTH STORY MAY NOT BE NEWS TO YOU.

WHAT MIGHT BE NEWS IS THE SEGMENT OF THE ASIAN GROWTH STORY THAT RELATES TO THE MIDDLE CLASS.



WHAT THIS SLIDE TELLS US IS THAT, BETWEEN NOW AND 2030, ASIA'S MIDDLE CLASS IS ANTICIPATED TO MULTIPLY SIX-FOLD.

CHINA'S MIDDLE CLASS ALONE IS EXPECTED TO REACH ONE BILLION BY 2030.

NOTHING COMPARABLE WILL BE SEEN IN ANY OTHER REGION.

IN AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST, THE MIDDLE CLASS WILL GROW; BUT ONLY BY TWO AND A HALF TIMES; LATIN AMERICA ONLY BY ONE AND A HALF TIMES; AND THE MIDDLE CLASS IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA WILL BE STATIC.

THIS PHENOMENAL GROWTH IN THE MIDDLE CLASS IN ASIA IS, I BELIEVE, OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE TO AUSTRALIA.

THIS COHORT OF PEOPLE WILL NOT ONLY BE WEALTHIER THAN EARLIER GENERATIONS OF ASIANS, THEY WILL HAVE DIFFERENT ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS.

AND THEY WILL HAVE DIFFERENT CONSUMPTION PATTERNS.

ONE SIMPLE WAY TO THINK ABOUT THEIR OUTLOOK IS THAT THEY WILL LOOK FOR THE SAME SORTS OF GOODS AND SERVICES THAT THE AUSTRALIAN MIDDLE CLASS IS USED TO.

THIS GROUP OF NEWLY WEALTHY ASIANS WILL BE CHANGING THE WAY THEY CONSUME A HOST OF THINGS – FROM CONSUMER ITEMS, TELECOM PRODUCTS, TRAVEL EXPERIENCES, FOOD AND BEVERAGES AS WELL AS EDUCATION SERVICES FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN.

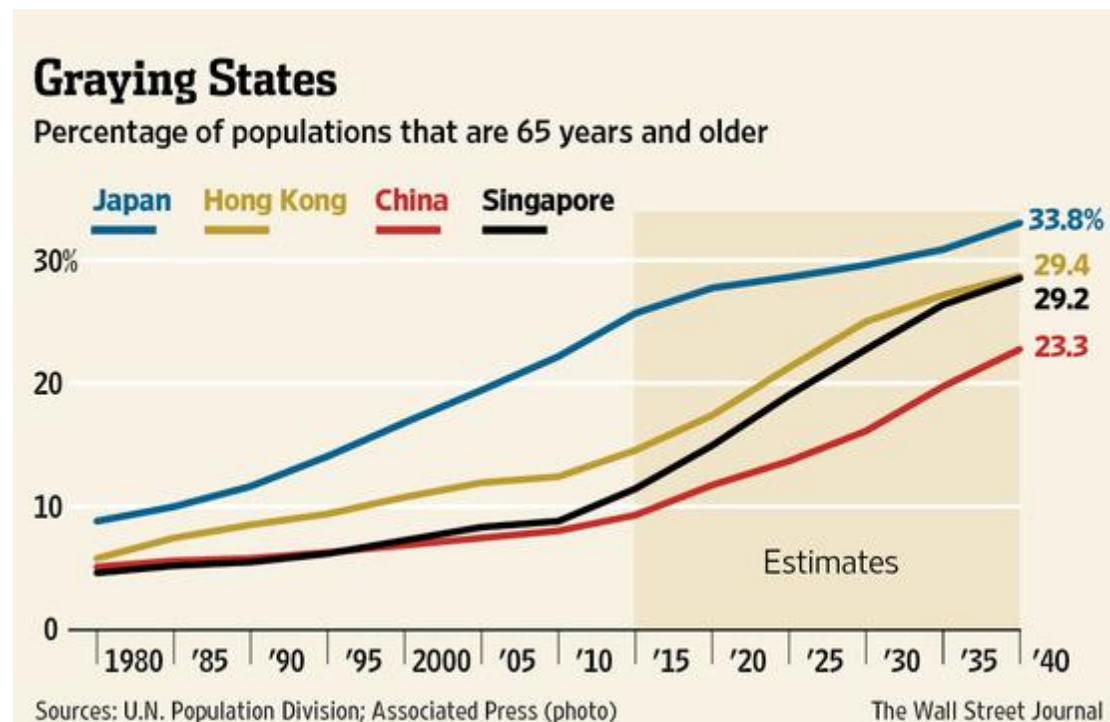
MOST IMPORTANTLY IN THE CONTEXT OF WHAT WE ARE HERE TO MARK TODAY, THE BURGEONING MIDDLE CLASS WILL BE DEMANDING ACCESS TO MORE AND BETTER QUALITY HEALTH CARE SERVICES.

ONCE AGAIN, THE SAME SORT OF HEALTH SERVICES THAT AUSTRALIANS HAVE BEEN USED TO FOR DECADES, WILL BE WITHIN THE REACH OF A VERY SUBSTANTIAL NEW GROUP OF ASIANS.

CLEARLY THE SUPPLY OF HEALTH SERVICES IS VERY DIFFERENT TO THE SUPPLY OF FOOD OR ENERGY, BUT THE QUESTION OF THE ROLE THAT AUSTRALIA PLAYS AS ITS REGION DEVELOPS A REQUIREMENT FOR THE SORT OF SERVICES WE HAVE SUPPLIED FOR DECADES IS WORTH CONSIDERING.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER DYNAMIC WHICH ADDS TO THE PICTURE.

THAT IS THE PHENOMENON OF AN AGEING POPULATION IN A NUMBER OF KEY ASIAN NATIONS.



IN SOME KEY ASIAN COUNTRIES – AND NOTABLY IN THE MEGA-STATES OF JAPAN AND CHINA - POPULATIONS WILL BE AGING SUBSTANTIALLY OVER THE NEXT GENERATION.

IN FACT, THE POPULATION OF PEOPLE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC AGED OVER 60 IN THE REGION WILL TRIPLE BETWEEN 2010 AND 2050, REACHING CLOSE TO 1.3 BILLION PEOPLE.

I SHOULD NOTE THAT THE AGEING OF ASIA IS FAR FROM A UNIFORM PHENOMENON ACROSS ASIA.

COUNTRIES SUCH AS VIETNAM, INDIA, THE PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA HAVE RELATIVELY YOUNG POPULATIONS.

BUT FOR COUNTRIES LIKE CHINA IN PARTICULAR, AN AGEING POPULATION WILL BE A KEY FEATURE OF THE NEXT GENERATION OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT.

WHAT IS STRIKING TO ME ABOUT THAT IS THAT THIS IS A PROBLEM THAT HAS BEEN A KEY ISSUE IN AUSTRALIA FOR DECADES.

I HEAR FREQUENTLY IN SINGAPORE THE VIEW THAT WE IN AUSTRALIA HAVE BEEN DEALING WITH PROBLEMS FOR DECADES THAT THEY ARE NOW ONLY BEGINNING TO TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO.

AGEING IS OFTEN AT THE TOP OF THAT LIST.

IN FACT, THE AGING SOCIETY IS PARTICULARLY TOPICAL IN SINGAPORE RIGHT NOW. THE CENTREPIECE OF SINGAPORE'S RECENT BUDGET WAS A RANGE OF MEASURES TO SUPPORT WHAT THEY CALL "THE PIONEER GENERATION" – THE SINGAPOREANS WHO BUILT THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE AFLUENT SOCIETY YOU SEE TODAY.

AND SINGAPORE HAS LOOKED TO AUSTRALIA – ALONG WITH A RANGE OF GLOBAL BENCHMARKS – FOR INPUTS FOR THEIR PIONEER PACKAGE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I WANTED TO BRING TO YOUR ATTENTION THESE TWO BIG DYNAMICS IN ASIA – THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS, AND AN AGING POPULATION IN SOME KEY COUNTRIES.

I DID SO NOT BECAUSE I KNOW WHERE THESE DYNAMICS WILL LEAD, OR WHAT THEIR CONSEQUENCES WILL BE FOR AUSTRALIA.

BUT I DID WANT TO BRING THESE DEVELOPEMTNS TO THE ATTENION OF AN AUDIENCE LIKE THIS... BECAUSE THEIR SCALE WILL PRODUCE OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSEQUENCES,

PERHAPS EVEN CHALLENGES FOR AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND, OF REAL IMPACT.

ON THE BASIS OF WHAT WE KNOW, WHAT MIGHT BE SOME OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS FOR US?

FIRST, I THINK THERE WILL BE A COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY.

AUSTRALIA, HAVING BEEN THROUGH MUCH OF THE TRANSITION TO AN OLDER POPULATION THAT SOME IN ASIA ARE JUST COMING TO GRIPS WITH, WILL HAVE EXPERTISE AND SERVICES TO OFFER.

AUSTRALIA'S HEALTH SYSTEM IS NOT PERFECT AND I AM CONSCIOUS THAT ITS IMPERFECTIONS ARE MORE EVIDENT TO MY AUDIENCE TODAY THAN MOST – BUT I AM SURE YOU WILL AGREE THAT WE HAVE MANY SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES. THEY WILL BE IN DEMAND.

BUT, FOR A SOCIETY LIKE OURS, I SUSPECT THAT THERE WILL BE A RANGE OF APPROPRIATE RESPONSES BEYOND THE MERELY COMMERCIAL. THERE ARE MANY WAYS THAT AUSTRALIA CAN PARTNER WITH COUNTRIES IN ASIA AS THEY GRAPPLE WITH THESE PHENOMENA.

WE CAN SUPPORT THE STRENGTHENING OF HEALTH SYSTEMS, SHARE LESSONS ON IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCIES TO CATER TO GROWING NUMBERS OF PATIENTS DEMANDING ACCESS TO QUALITY SERVICES AND SHARE OUR EXPERIENCES IN THE USE OF HEALTH CARE APPROACHES AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES.

AND WE ARE ALREADY DOING SOME OF THIS.

THROUGH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, WE ARE WORKING IN CLOSE PARTNERSHIP WITH GOVERNMENTS, THE PRIVATE SECTOR, MULTILATERAL AGENCIES AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS TO STRENGTHEN ACCESS TO AND THE QUALITY OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE REGION.

FOR EXAMPLE, AUSTRALIA, IS WORKING TOWARDS STRENGTHENING INDONESIA'S PUBLIC HEALTH POLICIES

THROUGH BETTER PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND BUDGETING.

THIS WILL SEE IMPROVEMENTS IN HOW PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICES ARE DELIVERED ACROSS INDONESIA. WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND THOSE MARGINALISED RURAL POPULATIONS IN INDONESIA WILL SEE BENEFITS FROM THESE CHANGES.

AS THESE SUGGESTIONS INDICATE, I EXPECT THAT THE POTENTIAL FOR ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND ITS ASIAN PARTNERS IN THE HEALTH SECTOR IN COMING DECADES TO BE VERY LARGELY A POSITIVE PROCESS, WITH MANY FINE OPPORTUNITIES FOR AUSTRALIA.

BUT THERE MAY BE CHALLENGES TOO. HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS OF THE SCALE THAT ASIAN MIDDLE CLASSES WILL REQUIRE WILL DEVELOP THEIR OWN SENSE OF GRAVITY. THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE BACKED BY VERY SUBSTANTIAL FUNDING.

THE PROSPECT THAT LARGER NUMBER OF TALENTED AUSTRALIAN INDIVIDUALS OR CORPORATES WILL BE DRAWN AWAY FROM OUR SHORES TO WORK AND LIVE IN ASIA IS A PROSPECT WORTH WATCHING CLOSELY AS THE PHENOMENON UNFOLDS.

THERE WILL ALSO BE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS IN THIS REGION.

AGAIN THERE IS ALREADY WORK GOING ON, ON WHICH WE CAN BUILD.

FOR EXAMPLE, AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL AND SINGAPORE'S AGENCY FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH COLLABORATED ON RESEARCH TO COMBAT DISEASES SUCH AS TUBERCULOSIS, DENGUE FEVER AND INFLUENZA.

RESEARCH INTO METHODS OF PROVIDING HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE AGED WILL BE, I EXPECT, AN AREA OF EXPENDING INTEREST TO OUR REGIONAL RESEARCH PARTNERS.

JUST AS IMPORTANT TO THE REFORMED DELIVERY OF HEALTH SERVICES TO THE AGED, IS THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS.

THIS INCLUDES TRAINING FOR GERONTOLOGISTS AND AGED CARERS - MAINLY TO SUPPORT THEM IN TRANSITIONING TO THE ADOPTION OF NEW, MORE PRODUCTIVE WAYS OF DELIVERING HEALTH CARE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

I AM CONSCIOUS THAT THE DYNAMICS OF ASIA'S ECONOMIC RISE AND ITS AGEING POPULATIONS MAY SEEM FAR FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF YOUR MEDICAL PRACTICE EACH DAY IN AUSTRALIA.

THAT IS UNDERSTANDABLE. YOU HAVE HEAVY BURDENS TO LIFT IN TREATING PATIENTS AND MANAGING HEALTH SYSTEMS AND ORGANISATIONS.

AND FOR THE NEW GRADUATES AMONGST YOU, YOU HAVE A CELEBRATION TO GET ON WITH, AND A NEW PART OF YOUR CAREER TO NAVIGATE.

I DID THINK IT WAS WORTHWHILE ME BRINGING THESE TRENDS TO YOUR ATTENTION, HOWEVER.

IN AN INCREASINGLY GLOBALISED WORLD, EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED TO EVERYTHING.

AND FOR AUSTRALIA, OUR CONNECTION WITH THRIVING ASIA IS ALREADY CLOSE, AND IN MY VIEW, CAN ONLY GROW.

SO, WHILE THE DYNAMICS OF ASIA MAY SEEM REMOTE TO THE DEMANDS OF YOUR WORKING LIVES NOW, MY GUESS IS THAT THEY WILL NOT ALWAYS BE SO.

THEY WILL BE PRODUCING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES, PERHAPS ALONG THE LINES SKETCHED TODAY.

WITH THAT, I LEAVE YOU WITH BEST WISHES MADAME PRESIDENT FOR YOUR CONFERENCE; AND WITH CONGRATULATIONS AGAIN TO THE GRADUATES.

MAY THE REMAINING DAYS OF YOUR TIME AT MARINA BAY – AN ICON OF ASIA’S GLEAMING FUTURE – BE PROFESSIONALLY REWARDING AND PERSONALLY ENJOYABLE.

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